

Boston Globe Editorial

Treasurer Steve Grossman deserves praise for taking his name off MassMoney

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When the state treasurer's office last week published its semi-annual "MassMoney" report on unclaimed property — the early Christmas present to citizens who somehow lost track of old, unclosed bank accounts, stock dividends, insurance proceeds, and the like — there was something missing: the name of the state treasurer. He is, in fact, Steven Grossman, and he deserves a pat on the back for resisting the temptation to promote himself.

Since at least Robert Q. Crane, state treasurers have delighted in decorating the unclaimed-property list with their names, photos, and best wishes, hoping that the joy of discovering a lost bank account will spill over into good will toward the man or woman who made it happen. It was crass and perhaps even unethical, in the sense of using a public advertisement or mailing for political gain. But like putting the name of the governor or transportation secretary on road signs, or the mayor on the cornerstones of public buildings, the plumping of state treasurers was more or less accepted. A name on a cornerstone at least marks a moment in history, but there's no obvious justification for putting the treasurer's name on an unclaimed-property list.

When Grossman took office in January 2011, the list already included a space for the treasurer's name and photo, and Grossman followed tradition, according to his spokesman, Jon Carlisle. For the next two reports, in fall 2011 and spring 2012, Grossman removed his picture but kept his name. In this latest report, he did away with his name, simply identifying the list as a service of the state treasurer's office.

Grossman may have been at last partly influenced by the upcoming corruption trial of his predecessor, Tim Cahill, who is accused of plotting to boost his 2010 gubernatorial campaign by deploying \$1.5 million worth of lottery advertisements at a politically delicate time. Cahill denies the charge. But at least Grossman appears to be taking the right lesson from his predecessor's legal woes. The success of the state treasurer should be determined by the effectiveness of the programs he oversees, not his ability to market himself at public expense.